

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5100

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, January 22, 2007
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 26, 2007

Title: An act relating to information for students regarding health insurance.

Brief Description: Regarding health insurance information for students.

Sponsors: Senators Hobbs, McAuliffe, Regala, Fairley, Shin, Weinstein, Murray, Keiser, Prentice, Kline, Spanel, Fraser, Tom, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/22/07 [w/oRec-EDU].
Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/14/07, 2/26/07 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That it be referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Marr and Parlette.

Staff: Mich'l Needham (786-7442)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5100 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Brandland, Eide, Hobbs, Kauffman, Oemig, Rasmussen and Weinstein.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Hewitt and Zarelli.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: School districts are currently required to provide a number of health-related activities, including screenings for vision, hearing, and scoliosis; review of immunization records; and attainment of a medication or treatment plan for a child with a life threatening health condition.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Many school districts provide an informational packet which includes information on public insurance programs like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, as well as other programs like free and reduced-price meals. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in conjunction with Department of Social and Health Services and other departments, distributes a packet of informational materials to all 296 school districts. The 285 school districts participating in the food programs are required by the United States Department of Agriculture to distribute the packet to ensure the application for free and reduced price meals is made available.

Summary of Bill: At the beginning of each school year, beginning with 2007-08, public and private schools are required to ask whether students have health insurance. If the parent or guardian does not provide a response or indicates the student is not insured, schools are required to provide information about Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program via postal mail or electronic mail. OSPI is required to develop a one-page informational sheet with the Department of Health to post on its web site by August 2007.

Beginning in 2008, schools are required to report annually to OSPI on the number of students receiving the mailings.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Early Learning & K-12 Education): Either a school district or a designated community health care collaborative under a written contract with a school district must provide health insurance information to parents who indicate their students do not have health insurance or who do not indicate whether or not their students have health insurance. Schools must provide parents with information about health insurance programs in writing via postal mail, electronic mail, or existing communication channels by December 1, 2007. OSPI must work with the Department of Social and Health Services, not the Department of Health, and community health care collaboratives to develop a one-page informational sheet on health insurance for children. Beginning December 1, 2008, schools must report annually to OSPI the number of students that are reported as not having health insurance. A "community health care collaborative" is defined.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Schools are the natural place to connect with students and coordinate health information.

OTHER: School nurses are the logical people to connect with students and families, but there is a very high student to nurse ratio now. More active outreach efforts will be needed to really reach these families and assist them with enrollment.

Persons Testifying (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Senator Hobbs, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Lonnie Johns-Brown, School Nurses Organization of Washington; Liz Arjun, Children's Alliance.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education): PRO: Healthy children learn better. The intent to require schools to collect information about insurance is a positive step forward. Health insurance information can be made available in many ways. Getting the information to students is great, but it is also important to provide community outreach to help families fill out the paperwork. The bill should allow for community partnerships to collect data and encourage health coverage for the whole family.

CON: This bill creates an unfunded mandate.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education): PRO: Senator Hobbs, prime sponsor; Lonnie Johns-Brown, School Nurses Organization of Washington; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Holly Detzler, Communities Connect.

CON: Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Associations.